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panied by a carefully prepared explanatory text. It might be mentioned that the blanks to be used in this scheme are individual cards, and not lists. It is my pleasure to inform the Statistical Association that the plan there proposed was approved by the organization. Preparations are now being made to carry it into effect. It will be applied to the year 1890, and it is the hope of those who have the matter in charge that the participation in the effort will be general, thus securing from the beginning valuable results.

It is impossible to foretell which of these plans will be most successful. It is important to note that success means opportunities for study which have hitherto been closed to us. The success of either of these plans will be a step towards placing our country on a level with European nations in this respect. Important practical and theoretical problems hinge on the phenomena of crime, and we should have more adequate means of studying them.

ROLAND P. FALKNER.

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#### PRICE STATISTICS.

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The latest contribution to the subject of price statistics is an article by Soetbeer in Conrad's *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, Vol. xxi, No. 4, p. 412, entitled: "*Veränderungen im Niveau der allgemeinen Warenpreise im den Jahren 1881-1889.*"

The author first reviews the several attempts which have been made to obtain reliable statistics concerning the fluctuation of prices in the last fifteen years. For this purpose, so-called index numbers have been used, or percentages of combined averages. Various objections have been raised against this method. It is arbitrary and incomplete, and therefore yields unreliable results. But its chief faults are that the number of articles taken into account is too limited, and that the marked difference in the quantitative economic importance of the goods is either entirely overlooked or reduced to an inappreciable unit.

Most of these deficiencies are avoided by another method to which Soetbeer calls attention, although a considerable margin of errors is still left. It is based on the government valuations of international exchanges, which are observed with increasing interest and exactitude.

The German statistics begin to present appropriate material in 1881, after the statute of July 20, 1879, provided the necessary regulations regarding the declaration of quality and quantity of the goods imported, exported, and transported, and the average prices to be applied in the valuations. This system of the empire differs from that of England and the United States in so far as it does not call for self-declaration of values, but has valuations determined by official experts. The Board of Experts, appointed by the Statistical Bureau, is divided into sections, to each of which certain groups of goods are assigned. In preparing the statistics of last year thirty-nine experts were employed, who estimated the average prices of 933 articles.

They proceed in the following way: Certain groups of products belonging to the same kind are formed. The articles contained in these groups are considered in all their commercial relations, especially in the quantitative relations of the principal qualities in import and export. After having found the average prices of the several articles of which one group is composed, this average price of the group is computed. The import duties and export premiums are not taken into account. The valuations are made for the calendar year. To be of use they must be procured continuously from similar material and according to the same method. They enable us to compare the values of imports and exports for certain periods, but they do not help us in estimating the annual fluctuations in a certain country, since the imports and exports do not equal the production and consumption of such a country.

The fluctuation in prices for the period 1882 to 1889 as compared with the average prices of 1881 is computed as follows:—

	According to Imports.	According to Exports.	Average.
1881 . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0
1882 . . . . .	99.8	100.7	100.3
1883 . . . . .	98.2	98.5	98.4
1884 . . . . .	93.3	92.8	93.1
1885 . . . . .	85.8	85.8	85.8
1886 . . . . .	85.4	83.8	84.6
1887 . . . . .	85.5	83.5	84.5
1888 . . . . .	85.4	84.7	85.0
1889 . . . . .	88.6	87.2	87.9

The prices of articles in German foreign trade have thus been decreasing in the years 1883–87, especially so in 1884 and 1885,

although only gradually in 1886 and 1887, while they show a slight increase in 1888 and 1889. But in spite of this increase the average in 1889 is twelve per cent less than that in 1881.

Generally, from such fluctuations the value of money or the purchase power of gold is inferred. Such inferences are correct with regard to the purchase power of gold in wholesale trade, but not to the purchase power of gold in general, since there are other exchanges in which money is used as measure of value and means of payment. From the fact that prices have fallen twenty per cent since 1875, we are not justified in concluding that the means of existence have grown cheaper. On the contrary, the complaints are general that they have become more expensive, and this proves that the value of money has decreased. In retail trade, prices have by no means experienced the same reduction as in wholesale trade, while, on the other hand, higher wages, salaries, fees, are now demanded for all kinds of personal services. The house rents in large cities are higher, and many other things are more expensive. All this indicates a decrease in the value of money.

Soetbeer, however, does not agree with the bimetallists who maintain that the demoralization of silver has caused the fall in prices. He gives the following comparisons: The level of prices of 1885 and 1888 remained almost stationary, and from 14.2 to 15 per cent below that of 1881 and 1882, while the average price of silver in 1885 and 1888 fell from  $48\frac{5}{8}$  to  $42\frac{7}{8}$  pence. In 1889 the level of general prices rose about 3.4 per cent above that of 1888, but the average price of silver was lower than in 1888. In consequence of the new silver policy of the United States, the debates preceding it in Congress, and the speculation connected with it, the price of silver rose from 44 pence at the end of 1889 to 54 pence in September, 1890; but it does not seem probable that the prices of merchandise will follow this rise in the price of silver.

L. KATZENSTEIN.

In Weeden's *Economic and Social History of New England* (Boston, 1890), there is an appendix giving a table of prices from 1630 to 1789. The prices for leading staples of domestic production and rates of laborers' wages are stated with great regularity. The list will supplement that given in the *Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor* for 1885, the prices in the latter, however, not going back of 1785. For practical use, Mr. Weeden's list needs

explanation. The necessity of an intelligible interpretation of colonial prices is emphasized when a comparison is made between the two lists of prices mentioned above for the period when they overlap, 1758 to 1789. The discrepancies are so wide that a student would have to be very cautious in using either set.

In the *Banker's Magazine*, November, 1890, p. 333, is an article on *Relative Prices of Silver and Wheat*, by H. A. Pierce, in which a statistical table is presented, showing the production and exports of wheat and flour, and the prices of wheat and silver since 1873. The argument from the figures submitted is that low prices of wheat have been due not to larger production, but to the decline in the value of silver. The table is well prepared, and is suggestive in its presentation.

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#### PROBLEMS OF POPULATION.

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*Marriage Rates and Marriage Ages, with special reference to the growth of population.* By Dr. William Ogle. In *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* (London), June, 1890. Pp. 253-289.

The author advances the theory that there is an intimate relation between the marriage rate in England and the value of exports. In discussing the possible effects which wars or high price of wheat might have upon a disposition to marriage, he finds the first insignificant in England, and any actual effect of the second is denied. Contrary to a general belief, it is asserted that the marriage rate varies not inversely but rather directly with the price of wheat. A truer index is found in the value of exports which in turn may be taken as an indication of industrial activity. In the period 1839-88 there are only five years in which the marriage rate moved in a different direction from the export value. The graphic curves illustrating this are very striking. A comparison is also made between the marriage rate and the proportion of unemployed in certain trade unions, as given in recent labor statistics of the Board of Trade, and here again the correspondence in the respective fluctuations is very close. Even in the Glass Bottle Makers of Yorkshire United Trade Protection Society, with a small membership of 1600, it is found that "the fluctuations in the employment of this minute body of men correspond